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EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED WEEKLY BY THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

The Eastern Question.

From the N. Y. Tribune. A conference of representatives of the great powers of Europe, with those of Turkey and of Greece, will assemble at Paris on Saturday, the 9th inst., to consider and settle the Eastern question, so called. No gift of prophecy is needed to warrant the confident prediction that no real settlement can thus be effected—that such settlement will only be postponed to this meeting. The first decisive step towards a real settlement of the Eastern question will have been taken when the Turkish power is driven from Europe, and not before.

The Ottoman Turkish dominion nominally covers about 200,000 square miles of Europe, 500,000 of Asia, and a rather larger area of Africa—nearly 1,500,000 in all—much of it among the fairest and finest portions of the temperate zone. It is estimated that one-third of this vast extent is absorbed by Arabian and African deserts, where the Ottoman sway is, but nominal, and a source of weakness rather than of strength, there will still remain nearly or quite one million square miles of generally excellent soil, lying under the most benign skies, and in the most fertile situations, whether for the industry of commerce, or of agriculture, than of any other region on earth; while its population—though far less than it had one, two, or three thousand years ago, and still declining—ranges from thirty-five to forty millions.

But its government is an absolute despotism, and its ruling race bigoted devotees of the faith first propounded by the Arabian impostor, Mahomet, wherein unbridled sexual lust is followed by an irrational and intolerant fanaticism. The "twain relics of barbarism" are here still cherished; and, while slavery seems to be slowly waning out, polygamy is apparently as vital as ever. The Mahometans are obstinate fatalists; like all slaveholders, they shun work; while, like most Asiatics and polygamists, they are intensely unprogressive and slow to adopt the improvements made by others. Inhabiting the very cradle of European civilization, the Turk is essentially and invariably a barbarian.

All this is beyond the control of other people, so far as the Asiatic and African divisions of the empire are concerned; for they are preponderantly Turkish and essentially Mahometan. But Turkey in Europe—embracing the countries recently known as Macedonia and Thrace, with Asia (or Crete), and most of the islands in the Archipelago—is essentially, unchangedly, unchangeably, and Christian. It is preponderantly Christian, and about sixteen millions of inhabitants, whereof eleven millions are Christians, mainly of the Greek rite, leaving less than five millions of devotees of the Koran. Between these diverse races and creeds, fraternity is impossible and mutual regard unknown.

The Turks broke into Europe, over the wreck of the decaying Roman-Greek Empire of the East, nearly six centuries ago, and completed the ruin of that empire by storming the ramparts of Constantinople (called by them Stamboul) in 1453. The last Christian emperor perished in the assault, and the Turkish sultans have ever since made his capital their own. They soon afterwards subjected Greece and Albania to their sway, and in the next century extended that sway so far northward as Hungary, the more important portion of which was possessed and ruled by them for nearly a century. Under Soliman the Magnificent they laid siege to Vienna in 1529, but were compelled to raise it with the loss of 80,000 men. In 1683, during the reign of Mahomet IV, the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa again laid siege to the Austrian capital, but was driven out of his trenches and heading down the Danube by a hastily mustered Christian host, led by John Sobieski, King of Poland, with fearful losses in men, arms, and munitions. From that hour to the present the Turkish star has steadily declined; and the rapid rise of Russia from obscurity and impotence to the rank of a first-class power long since threatened the expulsion of "the Osmanli" (as they call themselves) from Europe. The Russians being Christian, the Greek rite, and are a majority of the people of European Turkey, the sympathy between the two peoples rests on grounds quite intelligible, and were long ago proclaimed. Russian victories have driven the Turks successively out of Podolia, the Crimea, and Bessarabia in Europe, as also out of Georgia and other Asiatic provinces. But for the jealousy of Russian aggrandizement evinced by Great Britain and France, especially the former, the Turks would have already been driven across the Bosphorus, as they inevitably must be. Though so long resident, it is notorious that they are merely "camped" in Europe. They do not belong to it; and the fairest quarter of it cannot much longer be held by them.

Intense corruption in the government and ruling caste has produced impotence; impotence is rapidly producing disintegration. Wallachia and Moldavia, the only two provinces still nominally retained by the Sublime Porte north of the Danube, have been united as Rumania, and are now ruled by Prince Charles, of the Prussian royal family, who yields but a nominal allegiance to the Sultan. Greece achieved complete independence, after a heroic struggle, between the years 1821 and 1827, though the new kingdom covers but a portion of ancient Greece, and includes but few of her islands. Servia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, in the northwest corner of the empire, accord but the merest figment of sovereignty to the Porte. There can be little doubt that a decided majority of the Christians of these, and of Bulgaria and Macedonia also, await but the opportunity and the signal to unite in a vigorous effort to drive the Turks out of Europe.

Greece, being absolutely independent, is the natural focus of anti-Turkish aspirations; Russia, as the big brother of Greece, will always be suspected and accused of fomenting hostility to Turkish rule. These charges—often false, always exaggerated—cannot blind a clear vision to the truth that the progress of events, the rapid growth of Christian civilization, have rendered the permanence of the existing regime simply impossible. The Turks have overstaid their welcome (if they ever had one) and must go. Had Russia no existence, this would have been as true as it now is. Nay, it is quite possible that Russian aspiration, by provoking British jealousy, has prolonged the sojourn of the Turks in Europe.

The presence of the Turkish and Greek envoys at the proposed conference is a blunder, which precludes the hope of a good result. Were they both absent, the great powers might possibly arrive at the rational conclusion that the Turks must be served with notice to quit, and that a federal republic or constitutional monarchy should now be established on the downfall of their baleful dominion. European Turkey, united with Greece in a federal republic as large as France, and as populous as Spain and Portugal united, would afford a firm bulwark against Russian greed, whereas its present

state invites aggression and compels intervention. The conference will, doubtless, prove a failure; but the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, while it may be postponed, cannot thereby be prevented.

Libels and Libel Suits.

From the N. Y. Herald. A Chicago paper some time ago published a report of a police case in which a situation *aggravate delicto* was alleged against certain parties. The latter brought suit for libel, and the case has been brought to a close in a verdict of seven thousand five hundred dollars damages against the defendants. The editors and proprietors of the paper showed that the publication was made against their express directions; that it appeared through the negligence of the reporter and foreman of the office, and that every retraction possible was made after its publication. The plaintiffs ought to have had some effect upon jury, and no doubt they would had the paper in question exhibited a little better taste in its manner of reporting the trial. It was there motives was shown, if not in the original publication. But the whole thing shows that the law of libel is wrong in many particulars. In some cases it is too stringent, in others too lenient. The proprietor of a newspaper should not in justice and equity be held responsible for every line that appears in his paper. He has to trust to the vigilance and fidelity of subordinates; and when it is clear no malice is shown, and in fact, where it is proven that an alleged libellous report has appeared against his express orders, it certainly seems that common sense should exonerate him from blame. The Chicago case, we see, is to be carried to a higher court, and we suggest that the proprietors of the paper allow it to be tested upon its merits alone, without bringing extraneous influences to bear one way or the other, right or wrong, upon the judgment of the jury.

While on the subject of libels and libel suits, we may state that we understood a dozen or more suits have been brought against those Bohemians who have recently been busily engaged in this city in circulating the character of some of our most worthy grocers and dealers. The developments on these trials will be curious and interesting. And, furthermore, we understand that Hon. Reuben G. Fenton, late Governor of this State, will bring suit against Thurlow Weed for the publication in his paper, in this city, of one of the most atrocious libels that the sordid brain of a disappointed lobbyist manager ever conceived. The disclosures in this case when brought to trial will be highly refreshing, and no doubt illuminate the entire tricks, lies, intrigues, backbiting, double dealings, and the myriads of other recalcitancies which have won for the Albany lobby an unenviable notoriety all over the country.

Capital and Labor—The Eight-Hour Law.

From the N. Y. Times. The eight-hour law proved to be a failure, and its enactment is widely regarded as a farce. It was intended by those who asked for it to give ten hours' pay for eight hours' work, but is framed so as not to do anything of the sort. It simply declared that a day should mean eight hours in estimating the amount of labor, but at what rate it should be paid for was left an open question. The bill was passed on the eve of an election; and, like all bills passed under such circumstances, the men who passed it were anxious, not so much to make it of practical advantage to workmen, as to secure their votes by making them believe that it was so intended. Its enactment was a political trick—not prompted by a sincere regard for the working classes, nor framed with the primary motive of promoting their interests. It ought either to be repealed or revised. It should either say what it means, or it should say nothing at all. As it stands, it simply misleads both parties—employers and employed—and benefits neither. And in its application to persons employed by the Government, it has led to controversy, different action on the part of different departments, and general confusion and discontent.

It has generally been deemed, and has always been found, a perilous undertaking for Government to fix the prices or control the sale of food, clothing, labor, or any of the other necessities of life. The general principle that all these things to be best regulated when they are left to be freely regulated by the parties concerned, has been conceded by nearly all who believe in freedom at all. The attempt of governments to control these things has always failed, and we see no reason to believe that it will not always fail hereafter.

Capital has advantages over labor which labor will always deem unfair and unjust. It is much more manageable; its holders can much more easily combine; its power to hold out in a contest between the two is much greater; and, as a necessary result, its chances of success are the best. It is not, as necessary, nor to the prosperity of community as labor is. The South-to-day has plenty of labor, but its lack of capital renders its labor useless. As a general rule, capital can always command labor, while it is but rarely, and under very exceptional circumstances, that labor can impose its own laws upon capital.

Capital, moreover, has this great advantage that, if treated unjustly in any country, it can go elsewhere. The small returns capital can command in England send millions of English capital to this country every year; and an effective eight-hour law in England would send the great bulk of the free capital of the kingdom elsewhere. An effective eight-hour law here would have a similar effect. The large capitalists who invest their incomes in erecting dwellings, for example, will look to other quarters when building becomes so expensive as to be without profit. And then workmen who live by building, as well as all who hire dwellings to live in, must suffer by the change.

Capital and labor are dependent upon each other, and each profits and prospers only in connection with the other. But there is very clearly a general feeling on the part of the laboring classes throughout the world, that labor should have a larger share of the profits of the joint operation than it gets at present. Capital certainly gets the most. The capitalists of the world get richer;—they live more sumptuously;—they absorb, more and more, the culture, the grandeur, the enjoyments, and the power of the world;—while the laborers—the active partners in the whole concern—do not share in these advantages in a corresponding degree. These are strong points, and, in the main, they are true. And labor has an unquestioned right to change the terms of the partnership if it can, and to exact for itself a larger, while it imposes on capital a smaller, share of the advantages of their joint exertions.

But we doubt the possibility of making any very great changes in the relations between the two. Those relations are fixed and maintained by laws more potent than the enactments of any legislature. They do not depend on votes, and are not in the least affected by universal suffrage, nor distributed or checked in their operation by eloquent stump speeches in either editorial. A fundamental condition of free society is that all its elements, and all the forces that give it power, shall be free in their development; and any action of the Government that interferes with this retards the

growth and injures the prosperity of the society itself.

If labor cripples capital, it will drive it away, and so deprive itself of the only means whereby it lives. If capital oppresses labor, it degrades society, and saps the foundations of its strength. And if Government interferes with either, or attempts to regulate and control their mutual relations, it takes from both that freedom of action under natural and indefeasible laws, which is their only guarantee of growth and prosperity. Any law which deprives a laboring man of the right to get the most he can for his work, or of the right to work as much as he finds to his advantage, or which compels an employer to pay as much for little work as for much, or for poor work as for good, inflicts a gross injustice on the parties concerned, and cannot possibly promote the general good.

General Grant's Cabinet.

From the N. Y. World. The interesting Washington letter which we printed on Monday supplies better grounds for conjecturing the composition of the new Cabinet than were previously possessed by the public. We now know General Grant's estimate of quite a number of prominent men who might be supposed to have Cabinet aspirations. We may safely assume that Mr. Sumner has no possible chance to be Secretary of State; that Mr. Seward has no possible chance of a temporary continuance in that office; that none of the politicians who are affiliated with the Seward and Weed clique, or with the Morgan and Wells clique, or with the eyes of the press, are likely to find grace in the eyes of the President.

By far the most important position in the Cabinet is that of Secretary of the Treasury, and it is clear enough from General Grant's estimate of Senator Morton that that gentleman is not destined to fill it. The dislike which the President elect expresses for politicians that for responsible station may perhaps be considered as squinting towards Commissioner Wells. It cannot be denied that Mr. Wells has some important qualifications for that office. His integrity is above suspicion, and he is quite free from all entanglements or affiliations with rogues who wish to rob the Treasury. In making appointments to subordinate positions, he would look solely to honesty and capacity. Mr. Wells would bring to the office another important qualification which no man in the country can rival. He has been engaged, for the last three or four years, in the diligent study of our revenue system, with a mind unnumbered by the administrative details which engross the time and exhaust the strength of executive officers. He probably understands the present fiscal condition of the country better than any other man in it; his mind being stored with the most recent facts, and all the freshest results of financial investigation in other countries as well as our own. The drawback to such an appointment would be that Mr. Wells has never been in a position to test either his strength of will or his executive talents.

The chief duties of the Secretary of the Treasury are administrative; he has a vast and complex machine to superintend, and needs to be a man of indomitable energy, quick perceptions, ready insight into the despatch of business. The daily routine of the Treasury Department is a kind of employment in which Mr. Wells has had no training or experience; and if General Grant appoints him he will take a great deal upon trust. But in all qualifications for executive energy, he is perhaps as fit a candidate as General Grant can find in the Republican party. If General Butler had Mr. Wells' probity and financial knowledge, or Mr. Wells had Butler's activity, penetration, and knowledge of men, either would make an admirable Secretary of the Treasury. As between the two, with their actual qualifications, Mr. Wells is clearly entitled to carry the day.

The language of strong praise in which General Grant speaks of Senator Fessenden may perhaps authorize the expectation that he will offer him one of the most important positions in the Cabinet. The administrative facilities (partly, we may suppose, the consequence of infirm health) which Mr. Fessenden exhibited as Secretary of the Treasury would be no solid objection to making him Secretary of State, an office which does not make such constant drains upon nervous energy. Mr. Fessenden has never been credited with a very extensive knowledge of foreign affairs; but Seward and Sumner, being quite out of the range of choice, Mr. Fessenden is as good an appointment as General Grant can make, if he takes the mistake of passing over Charles Francis Adams, by all odds the fittest, ablest, and best equipped statesman in the country to be intrusted with our foreign relations.

Until these two capital places—the Treasury and State Departments—are disposed of, the country will feel comparatively little interest in the other Cabinet appointments. If the War Department should be bestowed upon some distinguished soldier, and the Navy Department upon an eminent officer in that branch of the public service, the people would recognize the fitness of such selections and give them their approval.

Disobedience to Bad Laws a Virtue. From "Brick" Pomeroy's N. Y. Democrat. A paper calling itself Democratic has a sentence of this supreme foolishness:—"Laws, whether good or bad, ought to be implicitly obeyed." It is not only a truism, but a great truth, that a bad law is a crime, while the obeying of a bad law is a crime. The essence of right and wrong does not depend upon words and clauses inserted in a code or statute book, but upon reason and the nature of things, antecedent to all laws. It is said that submission to tyrants is disobedience to God. Submission to bad laws is disobedience to virtue and justice. The Northern people who condemn the so-called reconstruction acts as violation of all just law and of civilization, and who have not risen up in their wrath against them, and helped the Southern people defend the right, are either criminals or cowards. No man who attempts to administer such laws should be allowed to live either in the South or North. He ought to be regarded and treated as the common enemy of mankind. Wherever he appears in the public streets the dogs should be set upon him, and he should be allowed to pass nowhere except under the general hiss and scorn of the people.

Cicero laid down this fundamental maxim:—"It is a maxim of the law, that whatever we do in the way and for the ends of self-defense, we lawfully do." By this eternal maxim of law, have not the Southern people the clear right to hang M-ade, or any other tyrant commander sent by the Rump to rule over them? To hang them, or to poison them like dogs? If we may, here in New York, poison a dog which endangers the health and life of our family, why may not a man in another State serve a human dog in the same manner?

All that a man must do to preserve his property, his life, his liberty, and the life and liberty of his family, he has a right to do; nay, he ought to do it. Whatever the rights

of a man are against a highwayman, he holds against a tyrant, or the tools of a tyrant. Whatever the rights of a man are against a robber or poisonous vermin, he unflinchingly holds against his oppressors. The right of any people to liberty or self-government carries with it the sacred, the eternal right to remove every obstacle to their freedom, whether it be a king, a congress, a general, or an assassin. All obstacles to genuine liberty live by no other tenure but that of the cowardice or weakness of the oppressed. If there was any thing that God impressed upon his anointed people of Israel, it was the right and the duty to slay all tyrants. To slay them, either by war or by the dagger. Perhaps a nobler tyrant never lived than Cæsar, and yet the whole world have adored the virtues of the hands that slew him. Even the famous old divine, Beza, says:—"No man can justly reprehend Brutus, Cassius, and the rest who killed Cæsar." Statues of brass were erected to their honor at Athens. And ever since all enlightened mankind have consecrated the name of Brutus to virtue and liberty.

Twenty centuries have covered him with glory for killing a tyrant. Time never failed to cover any man with glory who slew a tyrant. Time never failed to reward with immortal honor any people who resisted and destroyed oppressive laws.

Then let the taxed and oppressed people of America prepare to treat unjust laws or tyrannical law-makers as brave and virtuous men have, in every age of the world, treated them—to fire and slayers. Until the score of Congresses see this spirit bursting up like flames out of the bosoms of the people, they will still drive on their accursed Juggernaut.

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